

The ABILITY LINK



disABILITY LINK Quarterly Newsletter

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Picture descriptions:

Shown is a group photo of the disABILITY LINK staff stood in front of a mirror for our annual Consumer Appreciation Party

Social Media



@disabilitylink



**disABILITY
LINK**
the center for rights & resources

Edited and Designed by Jake Key Social Media Specialist

Capitol Crawl

On March 12th 1990, more than 1,000 individuals with disabilities converged in Washington DC to urge Congress to approve the Americans with Disabilities Act other words known as the ADA. They chanted "What do we want?" "ADA" "When do we want it?" "NOW!" ...

To symbolize the barriers confronting disabled people, more than 60 activists abandoned their crutches, wheelchairs, power chairs, and other mobility-assistance devices and began crawling up the 83 stone steps that lead to the Capitol.

After the protest called "Capitol Crawl", Congress passed the ADA on July 26th, 1990; President George H.W. Bush signed the ADA. Bush said at the signing ceremony. "Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down," .

The law (the ADA) aimed to end segregation of physically and mentally disabled persons and promised them equal opportunity to participate in society, live independently and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The Passage of the ADA 32 years ago marked a monumental shift in improving Civil Rights of individuals with disabilities; there is still a long way away from making spaces more inclusive for everybody.



Photo Description: Shown is a group of people with disabilities led by an 8-year old crawling up the steps of the U.S Capitol

**Article by
Nicoal Whitworth**

Transition Fair

On March 9th, of 2024, disABILITY LINK staff attended a transition fair held at Benjamin Banneker High School along with vendors and representatives from Atlanta Public Schools, Miracle League At South Fulton and the Fulton County School System and many more.

The purpose of the transition fair was to assist high school students including those with disabilities to build the skills and support they need to successfully reach post-secondary goals, while still in high school. Having these skills early in life can help lead them to know their rights and to bettering their knowledge of systemic advocacy.

disABILITY LINK's participation as a whole was a success. Staff members spoke with representatives from the Fulton County Schools who wants to build a partnership with disABILITY LINK that will allow students of Fulton County Schools to become consumers in the hopes of providing resources that will lead to further education or employment opportunities for these students.

This was a successful event that will open doors to more events like this in the future for these graduating students as well as more partnership opportunities between disABILITY LINK and Fulton County Schools.



Photo Description: Shown is Helen Lewis sitting at the disABILITY LINK table during the Transition Fair

**Article by
Helen Lewis**

Pancake Day

We are thrilled to share the success story of our latest endeavor teaching youth with disabilities the art of pancake making! Here's a glimpse into our incredibly rewarding journey. In our commitment to inclusivity, we believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to explore their culinary talents. With this in mind, our team embarked on a mission to empower youth with disabilities through the joy of cooking. With eager hearts and stacks of fluffy pancake mix, we gathered our chefs for a hands on cooking experience like no other. The excitement in the room was obvious as each participant eagerly put on their aprons and rolled up their sleeves. From mastering the art of the mixing batter to perfecting the elusive pancake flip, our students tackled each challenge with unwavering determination and boundless enthusiasm they transformed simple ingredients into golden disc of culinary delight.

Our journey extended far beyond the confines of the kitchen. Through teamwork, communication, and mutual support, our students forged lasting friendships and discovered newfound confidence in their abilities. The kitchen became a safe space for self-expression and personal growth. It was clearly shown that something truly special had transpired, the youth not only learned the fundamentals of cooking but also gained a sense of empowerment and belonging that will stay with them long after the last pancake has been devoured.

Article by Janae Nelson

Basic Advocacy Training

On March 14th of the year 2024 Ken Mitchell hosted a training course for newly hired workers at Disability Link on the topic of the Paratransit system, with a focus on the local paratransit system operated by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, MARTA Mobility. The class covered the 3 categories that make an individual with a disability available to use paratransit and potential documentation that may be needed to make an individual eligible for this service. The course also covered the legal reasons for paratransit, which is stated in the Code of Federal Regulations #49, 37-39. The CFR was established to give individuals with a disability the same access to public transit as a non-disabled individual. The paratransit system operated by a participating city must operate at the same times and dates as the transit system. Its goal to make public transit accessible for all citizens, regardless of disability. The requirements would for use are that people who can't travel on the bus or train even if it's accessible, because of disability. In addition people who need an accessible bus or train are included and people who have a specific disability-related condition.

Ken Mitchell gave details, tips and pointers on the MARTA Mobility system located in Atlanta, GA, USA. He gave information on the policy of MARTA Mobility No-shows, the times requested by persons with a disability that MARTA Mobility does not show for appointment. The policy for reporting such incidences to MARTA, and if not resolved, to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The FTA ensures that providers properly implement Title II of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), the DOT (Department of Transportation) ADA regulations, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Disability Link is heavily involved with the process of getting individuals with a disability, be it a mental or physical impairment, access to the paratransit system of Atlanta. The course taught by Ken was very informative and professional.

Article by Will Lindsey

Unlocking Inclusivity on Smart Devices

In a heartwarming display of inclusivity and community spirit, our LGBTQIAP++ disABILITY Group recently organized a memorable outing to the local movie theatre to watch the beloved holiday classic "Elf". This event was not just about entertainment; it symbolized the importance of creating spaces where everyone feels seen, welcomed, and celebrated.

The decision to watch "Elf" together was deliberate and meaningful. While the movie itself is a delightful comedy filled with humor and Christmas cheer, it also carries themes of acceptance, embracing differences, and finding joy in being true to oneself—themes that resonate deeply with our group's values.

For our attendees, seeing characters like Buddy the Elf navigate a world where he's different but ultimately finds acceptance and love reinforces the message that they too deserve to be embraced for who they are. Representation in media matters, and films like "Elf" can serve as powerful reminders of the beauty of diversity.

Similarly for our attendees, watching a character like Buddy, who approaches life with boundless enthusiasm and resilience despite facing challenges, can be incredibly empowering. It sends a message of determination, positivity, and the importance of supporting one another through life's ups and downs.

The outing to the movie theatre was not without its logistical considerations. Our group worked diligently to ensure that the venue was accessible to all, providing accommodations such as wheelchair-accessible seating, captioning devices for those with hearing impairments, and sensory-friendly options for individuals who may experience sensory sensitivities.

The atmosphere at the theatre was electric with anticipation and camaraderie as members gathered, shared snacks, and exchanged stories before the movie began. Laughter filled the air as Buddy's antics on screen brought joy to everyone in the audience, regardless of their background or identity.

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Unlocking Inclusivity on Smart Devices

After the movie, as we gathered outside the theatre for a group photo, the sense of unity and belonging was palpable. For many, this outing was more than just a night at the movies—it was a reaffirmation of their place in a supportive and inclusive community.

Events like these highlight the importance of creating spaces where people of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities can come together, share experiences, and celebrate what makes each of us unique. They remind us that by fostering understanding, empathy, and acceptance, we can create a brighter and more inclusive future for everyone.

As we look forward to more gatherings and activities in the coming months, let us carry the spirit of "Elf" with us—the spirit of embracing our differences, finding joy in togetherness, and spreading love and laughter wherever we go.



Photo Description: Shown is Seth Newton and Shayne Russel using the computer lab

Advocating for Accessible and Affordable Transportation

Navigating through Dekalb, Fulton, and Clayton counties is crucial for everyone, especially individuals with disabilities. Whether it's reaching medical appointments, the grocery store, or work, timely transportation is paramount. Unfortunately, for those with disabilities, this can often be a common challenge.

Dependence on MARTA Mobility presents its own set of difficulties, with scheduling pickups proving to be a cumbersome process. This frustration can dissuade passengers from relying on MARTA Mobility for their transportation needs. While Lyft or Uber are alternatives, they can be expensive, particularly for wheelchair users like yourself. The added cost due to the wheelchair component can make these options financially burdensome, with fees approaching \$50.

In such circumstances, it becomes essential to assert our rights as MARTA Mobility riders. Voicing concerns through complaints is a powerful tool. As individuals with unique needs, filing complaints when the service falls short is an avenue to communicate our experiences to the relevant authorities. By doing so, upper management becomes aware of these issues, prompting corrective action. Remember, you are the advocate for your own needs, and filing complaints is a means to ensure that the system works better for everyone. We are the leaders of our own lives, and persistence in advocating for our rights is key. Never give up on expressing your concerns and seeking improvements in the services that impact your daily life.



Photo Description: Shown is an image of James Turner using a wheelchair lift

Article by James Turner

CORE Vaccine Drive

On October 19, 2023, disABILITY LINK hosted a vaccination clinic at our office in collaboration with Walgreens. Pharmacists from the Walgreens located on Lavista and Oak Grove Road joined us to administer both COVID and Flu vaccines. A total of 46 individuals received vaccinations, with some opting for the updated COVID Moderna shot, others for the flu shot, and some choosing to receive both. The participants comprised consumers, staff members, and friends of disABILITY LINK, including several clients brought by United Cerebral Palsy, to whom we extend our gratitude.

To incentivize early participation, we distributed Walmart gift cards to the first few individuals who received their shots. Additionally, aside from the vaccines, we provided at-home COVID test kits and water bottles to all participants. Despite the inevitable discomfort associated with vaccinations, the overall feedback from participants indicated a positive experience.

Looking ahead, our next vaccination clinic is scheduled for January 9th, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm, in partnership with CORE (Community Organized Relief Effort) at our office. We emphasize the importance of vaccinations in reducing the severity and spread of diseases.



Photo Description: Shown is 2 smiling CORE workers seated behind their vaccination table

Article by Katrina Parsons

Doggie Day

On September 30th disABILITY LINK hosted our annual Doggie Day with furry friends, vendors, fashion, loads of fun and of course: Information on service animals, support animals the role they play in the lives their owner and your rights as a pet owner.

In a tail-wagging spectacle that captured the hearts of both two-legged and four-legged attendees alike, Doggie Day took center stage on September 30th. The event, which featured a myriad of activities for dogs and their owners, was a resounding success, drawing a large crowd of excited participants.

The venue buzzed with excitement as local and pet-centric vendors set up booths showcasing an array of products, doggy treats, stylish clothing, self-care products and more. Tails wagged enthusiastically as dogs explored the area, sampling tasty treats and sniffing out new friends.

Doggie Day also played host to a silent auction, offering a fantastic array of items generously donated by local businesses, community members and staff. The bidding wars were fierce as participants vied for coveted prizes, with all proceeds going towards the programs offered by disABILITY LINK. The charitable aspect of the event added a heartwarming touch, bringing the community together to support a cause close to many hearts.



Photo Description: Shown is a couple smiling consumers, Juanita Anderson, Marina Fishman, and Angela Williams all accompanied by their dogs for a doggie fashion show.

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Doggie Day cont.

One of the highlights of Doggie Day was undoubtedly the dazzling dog fashion show, where canine companions strutted their stuff on a red carpet runway. From adorable costumes to stylish accessories, the fashion-forward pups showcased the latest trends in doggie couture. The event's emcee kept the audience entertained with playful commentary, eliciting laughter and cheers from the delighted onlookers.

To keep the energy high and the tails wagging, a DJ spun a playlist of dog themed tunes throughout the event. The rhythmic beats set the perfect backdrop for the festivities, creating a joyful atmosphere that had both dogs and their owners dancing and celebrating together.

Doggie Day proved to be a bark-tastic success, fostering a sense of community among pet owners and showcasing the boundless joy, assistance and support that our furry friends bring to our lives. As the sun set on this unforgettable September day, attendees left with hearts full of happy memories and tails wagging in anticipation of the next paw-some event.



Photo Description: Shown is a very small puppy in a stroller in front of Felicia Banks

Long COVID and How to Fight It

I'm Shikha Desai, a member of the Community Health team. Each month, I coordinate with CORE and Walgreens to organize vaccine and flu drives. Additionally, our team hosts the COVID and Health Disparities Conversations every Thursday, a peer-led group discussing various health-related topics. In these sessions, we cover staying healthy during the holidays, navigating Long COVID, and maintaining a healthy diet while traveling. We recently featured a guest speaker in November who provided insights into Long COVID.

Long COVID manifests when individuals experience symptoms persisting for weeks, months, or even years after recovering from COVID-19. Some may initially recover, only to have symptoms return or new ones develop within a few months.

Every Wednesday from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM, we engage in neighborhood outreach, distributing flyers and COVID tests within the community. Our strong partnerships with CORE and Walgreens have been invaluable, enhancing our ability to serve the community effectively.

Collaboratively, our team created bags containing three COVID kits for individuals to take home after receiving vaccines and flu shots. We were fortunate to have CORE as guest speakers during our COVID and Health Disparities Conversations workshop, where they shared valuable information about various vaccines and boosters. Their presence extended to our consumer appreciation party, where they provided insights into different vaccines.

Our commitment to community health is strengthened by these partnerships and ongoing initiatives. I hope you will join us in the new year to learn more!



Picture Description: Shown is Katrina Parsons, Shikha Desai and Christina Humphrey smiling behind a table filled with white bags filled with COVID tests

Article by Shikha Desai

Executive Director Message

Dear Friends:

As we near the end of another year, the contemplation of the 2023 journey brings forth a blend of challenges and accomplishments. Similar to 2022, we faced obstacles that demanded resilience, but amidst those, we also celebrated numerous achievements. Peering into the horizon of 2024, I envision a landscape brimming with opportunities for growth, advocacy, and the fostering of peer support.

Whether you have been a longstanding member of disABILITY LINK or joined us this year, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your involvement. Your contribution is invaluable to our community.

A special acknowledgment goes to our dedicated staff, whose tireless efforts have shaped our success. Without your commitment, we would not be where we are today. I express my sincere gratitude for the significant role each of you plays in disABILITY LINK. The recognition of the Disability Inclusion Ally award bestowed upon us by the National Diversity Council and the Disability Inclusion Leadership Award presented to me fills me with pride and appreciation. I extend my thanks to our exceptional Board of Directors, whose unwavering support and oversight contribute to our financial health. Your time and financial contributions are truly cherished.

Our gratitude extends to our funders, with special thanks to the CareSource Foundation for supporting our employment programs and annual GALA, the Fulton County Community Services Board for enhancing our youth programs, and Amerigroup for aiding our newly established Diabetes Prevention Program and home modifications for two individuals.

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Executive Director Message cont.

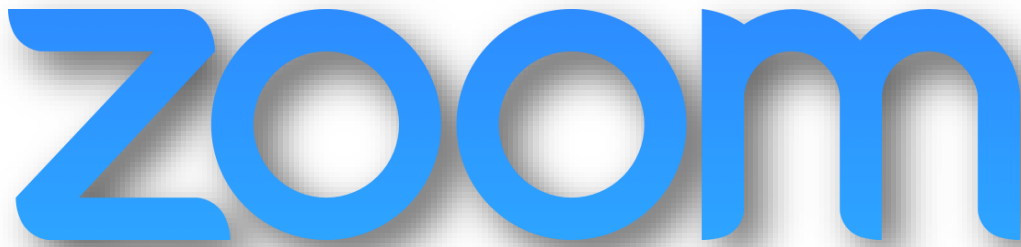
Additionally, I thank Individual donors and sponsorships also play a vital role in enriching our programming.

As we leap into the new year, our agenda includes advocacy days, vaccination clinics, and a myriad of workshops. April marks not only our Annual GALA but also 26 years of disABILITY LINK. I eagerly anticipate seeing each of you there.

Thank you once again for being part of our journey in 2023. We look forward to even greater success together in 2024! Wishing you and your families a safe, healthy, and joyous holiday season.

All my best,

Kim Gibson, DSW, LMSW
Executive Director



We are excited to announce that all of our classes held at disABILITY LINK are available through video conferencing. To participate outside of disABILITY LINK office join in from your computer, cell phone or landline phones. Webcams are not required but can be used for participation.

Join from a PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, or Android:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4046878890?pwd=dm9WTjA5aTBmMldscVplVTBqUzFSZz09>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16465588656,4046878890#

Or Telephone:

US: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 404 687 8890

Or by going to <https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting. Meeting ID is 404-687-8890 and password is 1901. Please note: All video conferencing is recorded. You can join in without signing up.

For additional information and accommodations please contact our office.



Please review the following list of dates for office hours, annual events, and office closings.

Normal Business Hours

Mon. – Thurs. 8:30 AM-4:30 PM

Fridays by appointment only

Workshops

Join us through audio and/or video conferencing for all our workshops

Join us
From personal computer, cell phone or landlines
By calling 1-646-558-8656 or by going to
<https://zoom.us/> and click on join a meeting.
Meeting ID is
404-687-8890 & password is 1901

Holiday and Office Closures

January 15th, 2024 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 19th, 2024 President's Day

Our Funding comes from different sources including grants, foundations, and fee for service programs.



"Funding provided in part by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Department of Community Development."

Supporters and grants:



Wish List:

- ♦ Laptops
- ♦ Youth Sponsorship/donations for programs and outings

Reminder to join us for our Annual GALA on April 20th, 2024. Contact our office for more information.

disABILITY LINK is now an application site for SNAP (Federal Nutrition Assistance program). If you would like to learn more about SNAP, to be screened for eligibility, or to apply for food stamp benefits. Please contact our office at 404-687-8890 or visit our office.

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